

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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R 160928Z MAR 78
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INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 3574

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS SHUM IS MZ US UR GE CI
SUBJ: NEGOTIATIONS FOR A THREE-WAY PRISONER EXCHANGE

REFS: (A) TEL AVIV 2259 (NOTAL), (B) STATE 43219 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: AN EMISSARY OF KNESSET MEMBER FLATTO-SHARON CLAIMS THAT, IN SEPARATE MEETINGS WITH EAST GERMAN LAWYER WOLFGANG VOGEL AND AUTHORITIES IN WASHINGTON, HE HAS OBTAINED AN AGREEMENT TO SWAP A SOVIET NATIONAL SERVING A SENTENCE IN A US PRISON FOR SOVIET DISSIDENT SHCHARANSKIY AND AN ISRAELI HELD IN MOZAMBIQUE. THE EMISSARY EXPECTS ANOTHER MEETING WITH THE LAWYER THIS MONTH TO EXCHANGE FORMAL LETTERS. IF THE PRISONER SWAP IS CONSUMMATED, FLATTO-SHARON STANDS TO BENEFIT IN DOMESTIC POLITICAL TERMS FROM THE ANTICIPATED FAVORABLE PUBLICITY. END SUMMARY

2. SHABTAI KALMANOVITCH, ASSISTANT TO MK SHMUEL FLATTO-SHARON, ON MARCH 14 BRIEFED EMBOFF ON HIS RECENT TRAVELS ON BEHALF OF SOVIET DISSIDENT ANATOLY SHCHARANSKIY AND MYRON
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MARCUS, AN ISRAELI IMPRISONED IN MOZAMBIQUE. (REF A).
KALMANOVITCH TOLD US THAT HE MET WITH CONGRESSMAN BENJAMIN GILMAN AND DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECY OF STATE J BRIAN ATWOOD IN WASHINGTON AND DCM FRANCIS MEEHAN IN BONN, HE SAID THEY WERE ALL EXTREMELY HELPFUL AND ARE AU COURANT ON THE DETAILS OF A POSSIBLE THREE-WAY EXCHANGE OF PRISONERS. KALMANOVITCH WANTED TO APPRISE THE EMBASSY AS WELL. ALTHOUGH WE ASSUME

THE DEPT AND EMBASSY BONN ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE DETAILS, HERE-
WITH IS A SUMMARY OF KALMANOVITCH'S BRIEFING.

3. EN ROUTE TO WASHINGTON LAST MONTH, ACCOMPANIED BY MARCUS' WIFE, KALMANOVITCH STOPPED OFF IN BERLIN TO SEE EAST GERMAN ATTORNEY WOLFGANG VOGEL AND OBTAIN CONFIRMATION OF HIS PROPOSAL TO KALMANOVITCH OF SEVERAL MONTHS AGO TO EXCHANGE MARCUS FOR ROBERT G THOMPSON, A SOVIET NATIONAL SERVING A SENTENCE IN THE LEWISBURG FEDERAL PENITENTIARY. AT THIS MEETING VOGEL SAID HIS CONTACTS WERE INTERESTED IN EXCHANGING SHCHARANSKIY AS WELL AS MARCUS FOR THOMPSON AND POLITICAL PRISONERS HELD IN CHILE BEFORE PROCEEDING TO THE US, KALMANOVITCH PASSED ON THE PROPOSAL TO MEEHAN, WHO HE SAID WAS ALREADY ACQUAINTED WITH VOGEL.

4. IN WASHINGTON KALMANOVITCH MET WITH GILMAN AND ATWOOD. ACCORDING TO KALMANOVITCH, THEY TOLD HIM THE US WOULD COOPERATE PROVIDED THE SOVIET UNION INITIATED THE REQUEST FOR THE EXCHANGE. KALMANOVITCH WAS TOLD TO OBTAIN A LETTER FROM SOVIET AUTHORITIES. KALMANOVITCH THEN MADE A TRIP TO SANTIAGO, WHERE HE LEARNED THROUGH THE INTERVENTION OF A JEWISH COMMUNITY LEADER THAT THE GOC IS RECEPTIVE TO EXCHANGING POLITICAL PRISONERS. HOWEVER, THE CHILEAN AUTHORITIES MADE NO CONCRETE PROPOSALS AT THAT TIME.

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5. BEFORE RETURNING TO ISRAEL, KALMANOVITCH AGAIN STOPPED IN GERMANY AND MET WITH MEEHAN AND THEN IN BERLIN TO CONVEY TO VOGEL THE RESULTS OF HIS WASHINGTON AND SANTIAGO TALKS. VOGEL AGREED TO OBTAIN A LETTER FORMALLY PROPOSING TO EXCHANGE SHCHARANSKIY FOR THOMPSON. HE ADDED THAT MARCUS WOULD BE THROWN IN GRATIS. ASKED WHAT ASSURANCE KALMANOVITCH HAD THAT MARCUS WOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE EXCHANGE IF HE WERE NOT MENTIONED IN THE LETTER, KALMANOVITCH SAID NOTHING WAS GUARANTEED. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT MARCUS' WIFE HAD LEFT A LETTER FOR HER HUSBAND WITH VOGEL AT THEIR FIRST MEETING. AT THIS LAST MEETING VOGEL GAVE HER MARCUS' REPLY. ALSO DISCUSSED WITH KALMANOVITCH IN WASHINGTON AND BERLIN WAS THE POSSIBILITY OF THE EXCHANGE OF AN AMERICAN IMPRISONED IN CUBA, WHOM KALMANOVITCH KNEW ONLY AS MR LUNK, FOR A FEMALE FRIEND OF CASTRO CONVICTED IN THE US FOR HI-JACKING A PLANE IN COSTA RICA.

6. VOGEL PROPOSED TO KALMANOVITCH ANOTHER MEETING IN HAMBURG AROUND MARCH 25 AT WHICH TIME HE WOULD HAVE A LETTER CONTAINING THE SOVIETS' FORMAL PROPOSAL FOR THE SWAP. KALMANOVITCH IS NOW AWAITING WORD FROM VOGEL CONFIRMING THE DATE FOR THE HAMBURG MEETING.

7. KALMANOVITCH IS OPTIMISTIC BUT HAS NO ILLUSIONS THAT THE SOVIETS COULD NOT STILL CALL OFF THE DEAL. HE THEORIZED THAT THE SOVIETS MAY ONLY BE DANGLING BEFORE THE ISRAELIS THE PROSPECT OF SHCHARANSKIY'S RELEASE IN ORDER TO EASE WORLD PRESSURE WHILE HIS TRIAL IS PENDING. HE RECALLED "WE WERE IN A PANIC" WHEN REPORTS OF AN EXCHANGE HIT THE PRESS LAST MONTH. THE FACT THAT MOSCOW DID NOT BRAND THE REPORTS AS FALSE AND THAT VOGEL SUBSEQUENTLY CONFIRMED THE SWAP-OFFER HEARTENED KALMANOVITCH.

8. KALMANOVITCH READILY ADMITTED THAT FLATTO-SHARON (WHO IS PROMOTING THE ENTIRE EFFORT AND IS, OF COURSE, FINANCING KALMANOVITCH'S TRAVELS) WOULD REAP A PUBLICITY
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BONANZA IF THE EXCHANGE GOES THROUGH. HE DREW A PICTURE OF FLATTO-SHARON MEETING SHCHARANSKIY AT THE AIRPORT WHEN HE ARRIVES AND ACTING AS HIS PATRON IN ISRAEL. THE IMPRESSION ON THE ISRAELI PUBLIC, FOR WHICH SHCHARANSKIY IS AN EMOTIONAL CAUSE, WOULD LIKELY BE DEEP AND HIGHLY FAVORABLE. VIETS

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